

## ***Natural Resource News in South Carolina***

*USDA-NRCS, 1835 Assembly Street, Room 950, Columbia, SC 29201*

### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Contact:** Amy O. Maxwell  
(803) 765-5402  
amy.maxwell@sc.usda.gov

### **South Carolina NRCS Receives Funds to Protect Farms**

*COLUMBIA, SC, April 11, 2006*--USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) State Conservationist **Walter W. Douglas** today announced the availability of nearly \$750,000 to protect agricultural land in South Carolina through the Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program (FRPP) in fiscal year 2006.

"Preserving South Carolina's prime agricultural farm and ranch lands helps to ensure a vibrant future for agriculture in our state," said Douglas. "Once protected by conservation easements, this land will be shielded from development pressure and continue to support our safe and abundant food supply."

USDA-NRCS is seeking proposals from state, federally recognized tribal and local governments and non-governmental organizations interested in working together to acquire conservation easements on farms and ranches. **The South Carolina NRCS State Office must receive proposals by 4:30 p.m. on May 11, 2006.** NRCS is expected to announce final project selections in June.

Since the program's inception in 1996, more than 277,811 acres of farm and ranch land have been protected in 43 states. FRPP protects productive agricultural land by purchasing conservation easements to limit conversion of farm and ranch lands to non-agricultural uses. Using existing programs, USDA partners with State, tribal, or local governments and non-government organizations to acquire conservation easements or other interests in land from landowners. USDA provides up to 50 percent of the appraised fair market value of the conservation easement in this voluntary program. State and local entities can match that amount, including the use of landowner donations.

The eligible farm or ranch must have the following components:

- contain productive soils, historic or archaeological sites;
- be part of a pending offer from a non-governmental organization, state, tribe or local farmland protection program;
- be privately owned;
- covered by a conservation plan;
- large enough to sustain agricultural production;
- accessible to markets for what the land produces; and
- surrounded by parcels of land that can support long-term agricultural production.

**South Carolina 2006 FRPP sign-up and application information can be found at [www.sc.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/frpp.html](http://www.sc.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/frpp.html), or call your local NRCS office.**

*USDA-NRCS is an equal opportunity employer and provider.*